Murder Love

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/5362628.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Abigail Hobbs
Additional Tags:	Light Angst, Fluff, Falling In Love, Alternate Universe
Language:	English
Series:	Part 4 of Murder Dating
Stats:	Published: 2015-12-06 Completed: 2015-12-11 Words: 11,626 Chapters: 5/5

Murder Love

by Hannigrammatic

Summary

Will and Hannibal fall in murder love.

Notes

Bit of angst here, following from the last part, but I assure you this part will be so full of fluff you'll all be begging me for more angst! LOL~ Not really, but yeah, I'm excited to write this part a LOT.

All mistakes are mine~

Unknown Desires

Chapter Summary

Hannibal is acting a little strange.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The small apartment was quiet save for the tick-tock of the plastic clock on the wall in the kitchen. Hannibal had been gone for a few hours now, and Will sat on the couch in the living room with Abigail. She was curled up against him and sleeping soundly, had been since they left the library, and as Will came down from the mountain of emotions hammering his body from the night's events, he could only feel a tired happiness that she was safe and relatively unharmed -there were harsh bruises on her tiny bird-bone wrists, and he found himself stroking his thumb over them very softly, and when she woke, he kissed a blooming black and yellow one gently.

"The don't hurt very much," she said quietly, but still Will felt as if his heartstrings were being tugged on.

"Maybe because I just kissed them," Will said with a smile he hoped looked at least partly genuine.

"Maybe," Abigail's voice had fallen to a whisper as she looked up at her father with wide eyes. "What happened to Mister Stammets?"

Will felt his stomach disappear briefly as he took in her pale features. Cute button nose and cheeks rounded with residual baby fat, she still resembled the bundle of joy he remembered holding close to his chest. Swaddled against him at all times, it felt, until she became an extension of him, until he was genuinely shocked that as she got older, he could no longer hold her. She was still his baby girl, but looking into her face was physically and emotionally painful because there was something else nestled there now.

It was a loss of innocence, and he was entirely responsible for it.

"Mister Stammets is going to be gone for a very long time," he finally whispered, voice hoarse.

"He's dead, isn't he?"

It had been uttered so innocently, but with such certainty that Will found himself floundering. Like a fish out of water, he opened his mouth and closed it uselessly, and the only sound that came out was an awkward-sounding squeak. He ran a hand through his hair and winced at the

pain in his knuckles, which he still needed to take a look at, having wrapped them with bandages cursorily while his daughter slept. Truthfully, he just wanted it all out of sight, had changed out of his dirtied clothes as soon as they got back, but blood wasn't the only thing that could stain.

"Abi," Will finally managed to say before he cut himself off, unable to continue and at an entire loss right now, but glad that she was still tucked against him and not running away in fright.

"He is," a voice broke the silence growing between them as Hannibal strode into the living room.

"Hannibal," Will fought the urge to stand and embrace the man, who he knew had been working hard the last several hours -for him-, before the other's words knocked around his skull enough to make sense, and he found a glare settling over his features before he could help himself. "Don't listen to him, Abigail. Ju-"

"Do you intend to insult us all tonight, Will?" the man's tone was hard, lacking any affection, anything at all really, and it turned Will's stomach around unpleasantly.

"It's okay, dad." Abigail announced, and she wrapped her arms tighter around Will and nuzzled against his side sleepily. "He deserved it."

"Sweetheart-"

"Abigail is a very smart girl, Will," Hannibal interrupted him harshly.

Will's thoughts swam. He gave up trying to make sense of his emotions, other than the panging hurt that registered at the way Hannibal sounded and looked just then. His maroon eyes stared down at them sitting on the couch with a dullness that felt like claws stabbing into Will's chest, and his voice… Hannibal sounded entirely different than what Will was used to, and he didn't like it. He felt a chasm open up between them that was vastly different than last night at Beverly's party, when they had been so close that Will felt as if they were very nearly one.

"It's fine, dad," Abigail's small hands were patting at his face. "Can I sleep in your bed tonight?"

"Of course," Will choked out, finally tearing his gaze away from the stranger standing in the living room.

"Will you take me there now? I'm so tired," and she flopped against him again as if in demonstration, so Will nodded and picked her up.

She was heavy, much too big now to be carried like this, but he made no complaint as he cradled her head against his shoulder and walked through the house. It was cleaned now, scrubbed of any sign of blood, everything that he had knocked down in his panic earlier on placed back where it belonged. Hannibal had truly taken the task to heart, and it was almost as if the last several hours had not happened. Will shuddered as he remembered too clearly

the pain of finding his daughter gone, and he held her tighter as they passed into his room. He tucked her in and watched her roll into the blankets and back into a deep slumber, exhausted from the ordeal but alive, safe, and barely accosted.

Will counted himself incredibly lucky to have been able to track Eldon Stammets as fast as he did, as the man had barely managed to cover his trail at all; he had obviously not planned the evening out sufficiently. Shaking his head, Will walked out of his room but kept the door wide open and the hall light on, and he returned to the living room hesitantly. Hannibal remained standing where they had left him and looked as if he had shut down internally, eyes darkened and face entirely expressionless as he stood ramrod straight despite how exhausted he must be. Unsure, Will approached him, but he stopped two feet away when the man's body jerked once.

"You cannot baby her, Will," Hannibal said, tone conversational but no less distant.

"She just watched me *kill* someone," Will said.

He felt his chest fill with anger. It was hot and sharp and it felt *good*, because it was something that Will was used to. He closed the distance between them and stood in front of Hannibal, resisting the urge to shove him back as he let the man's attitude -or lackthereof- affect him. The older man didn't flinch, didn't move an inch other than to track Will as he got closer, and his arms remained unmoving at his sides as they stood toe-to-toe in the living room. The only light here was coming from the hallway.

"I didn't want her to ever see that part of me," Will whispered harshly. "I reserve the right to baby her. She's my daughter and I don't want her to be okay with me killing. I don't want her to think anyone 'deserves' that."

"Why?" Hannibal challenged. "You decide that certain people deserve it. Why can't she?"

Will curled his lip in a snarl as he moved away, putting physical distance between them to match what he felt inside. Hannibal's face remained expressionless and his tone remained studious, questioning but nothing more. It was so hard to reconcile the man before him with the one who had held him close and trailed gentle fingertips along his face and neck and through his hair. And Will, exhausted as he was, couldn't handle this right now. He turned away and walked over to the couch.

"Just go away," he muttered. "I'm tired and I'm going to sleep now."

"No," Hannibal's voice had finally changed, and Will looked at him over his shoulder, confused but intrigued.

"No? This is my house," the younger man snapped, but there wasn't much bite to it.

"That may be the truth, but I've just spent the last several hours cleaning *your* house and picking up after you. You will come sit in the kitchen with me so that we may discuss this further."

Hannibal's voice was commanding and there was an undercurrent to it that was both terrifying and exciting. Will faced the man again but didn't take a step closer, staring at him across the tiny living room. The sparse amount of light did little to make the situation better as the older man inclined his head and pulled his features further into shadow.

"Will I?" the younger man found his voice was bereft of the anger that was very nearly shaking him apart now.

"Yes."

There was a very long moment of silence between them, and it went unhindered enough that Will's anger deflated out of him with a huff of breath. Nodding wordlessly, he walked out of the living room and flipped the fluorescents on in the kitchen, and he heard Hannibal follow him shortly after as he set the coffee machine to brew and took down two mugs. The sound of a chair scraping across tile was heard, but still there was silence stretching seemingly endlessly. He poured their coffee moments later and brought the steaming mugs over to the table, returned to nab the cream and sugar, and then took a seat across from Hannibal.

"You don't get to dictate what I do or don't do," Will said after a time, stirring copious spoonfuls of sugar into his beverage. "So stop that immediately and *ask* next time."

The unspoken 'or else' lingered between them, and that seemed to pique Hannibal's interest, and Will watched his eyebrow raise and his mouth soften into the ghost of a smirk. But he didn't challenge the comment, so the younger man worked at evening out his breathing and calming down.

"I apologize, Will," the older man said. "For overstepping your boundaries and for presuming to know what is best for Abigail."

"You don't sound it," Will groused. "You don't sound like anything at all. This feels like we're just strangers sitting down to coffee."

"Are we not strangers, Will?" Hannibal asked, smirk widening. "Or do you think you know me?"

Will paused with his mug of coffee halfway to his lips as he looked at the man. He was closed off and apparently intended to remain that way, and as much as Will wanted to act irrational in this moment, he swallowed his anger and the hurt that the man's words was working into him and sipped his coffee without commenting. The clock ticked away, louder now, and Hannibal mimicked Will's movements as he brought the mug to his lips and went quiet.

"I figured we were more than strangers," Will whispered, and he couldn't keep the hurt inside anymore.

Hannibal Lecter stared at him with hard red-brown eyes and thinned lips as he set the mug down with enough force to splash the black liquid around. The chair scraped back, and Will looked down at the table with his shoulders pulled tight with tension. He listened to Hannibal's expensive shoes tapping on the tile and assumed that he was leaving, but suddenly

the world upended as a fist closed around the collar of his shirt and pulled him bodily from his own chair. The air was knocked out of him as the older and stronger man shoved him into the kitchen counter harshly and followed before Will could react.

“We are *much* more than strangers,” Hannibal growled, and Will gasped as he was lifted up onto the surface behind him as if he weighed nothing.

Will hissed out a complaint but it was swallowed up by the mouth that crushed against his own, lips sealing against him in a kiss so demanding that the younger man found his entire body shuddering at the power of it. Hannibal’s tongue conquered his mouth wetly, pressed into him as commandingly as his voice had sounded earlier, and long fingers stroked into his hair to grip the curls nearly painfully tight. Will stared into the eyes so close to his own now and felt his heart seize up at the tenderness. He wanted to question the man’s behavior, rid them of the distance that still existed between them even then, but Will found himself far too focused on succumbing to the kiss, and he wrapped both of his arms around Hannibal’s neck as the bigger man fit himself snugly between his thighs.

“You have no clue what you do to me” Hannibal whispered against Will’s mouth when they drew away, the both of them panting lightly.

“Then tell me,” Will growled against him as he closed his legs around Hannibal’s waist and trapped him there resolutely. “Tell me why you’re like this tonight. Tell me and then come back to me.”

Hannibal’s face softened into something resembling human as he cupped the side of Will’s face gently. Behind them, the clock ticked the seconds away, and it was the only sound other than the rustling of clothes between the two men as their lips met in another kiss, soothing and slow as they devoured each other’s breath.

Chapter End Notes

There will be more of a 'talk' with Abi, for the record! She's just really tired right now~ This story is definitely going to be more than just Hanni and Will :D I am absolutely enamored with the Murder Family ideal, so that's gonna be a HUGE THING.

Unknown Variables

Chapter Summary

Will is exhausted but the world doesn't care.

Chapter Notes

This probably reads VERY badly, and I'm sorry about that! I had a lot of trouble writing this for some reason, but in the end it's still where I wanted it to be.

All mistakes are mine~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal's eyes were dark when he pulled away again, nearly black, and Will knew that he could easily get lost in those depths.

He set his hand along one sharp cheekbone and stroked his thumb near the corner of the man's kiss-swollen lips, and despite the exhaustion eating at him, Will felt that he could stay up the rest of the night trying to figure out the puzzle that was Hannibal Lecter.

"What are you thinking?" he asked the older man as they searched each other's faces.

"I am thinking that you ought to get some rest before work," Hannibal answered after a few quiet moments, and his tone was neutral.

Will had watched the thoughts flitting around Hannibal's brain but he had been unable to make any sense of them as usual. The man in his arms was hard to read and likely would remain that way, but he was determined to at least try, to hold on tighter and close the distance between them entirely. He trailed his fingers into Hannibal's hair and didn't look away, and he cupped his other hand against a strong jawline and felt it move as the other spoke. It took him far too long to make sense of the words that accented voice breathed into his face warmly, but when he did Will frowned.

"You're the one who said that we needed to talk about this," he argued, but it came out half-hearted and almost gentle instead of being firm like he'd intended.

"I know. And we will," Hannibal said. "But I was selfish, and I apologize for that. I will return tomorrow after we have both managed to rest sufficiently, and then we may resume this conversation."

Without another word, Hannibal pressed a chaste kiss to the corner of Will's lips and then strode out of the kitchen, his shoes tapping against the floor quietly. Will shut his eyes as he heard the front door close, and he let out a breath that he only now realized he'd been holding. He knew he should go to bed while he still felt relatively calm, soothed by the presence of the man who had just walked out of his house, but he found that he couldn't force himself to move as he considered the events that had just transpired.

❀

When Hannibal had left he had merely sat at the table again, staring at their mugs on the table as he tried and failed to make sense of everything that had happened in the last several hours.

He had no idea what was going to happen now, considering his boss was dead. He knew it wouldn't be tied back to him or his daughter or Hannibal, but what about the baby sitter? Unless she'd told no one where she would be, there was the chance they could be exposed. There were just too many variables to consider after the disastrous night, and Will was so very tired.

"Dad?" a small voice interrupted his thoughts as Abigail tiptoed into the kitchen, and Will sat up from his slouch and rubbed his hands against his eyes.

"Hi, sweetheart. Did you sleep okay?" he asked gently.

"Not really. I was worried about you," she sat down where Hannibal had been previously, and for a moment Will couldn't do much more than blink slowly as his sluggish brain knocked around his skull uselessly. "Dad?"

"Hmm? I'm sorry. Do you want to stay home from school today?" he desperately didn't want to talk about the last twentyfour hours, but he also didn't want to shelter her or lie to her more than he already had.

"No," she sounded tired, but her voice was pitched with stubbornness. "I just want to move on. I know Mister Stammets did a bad thing and I know you took care of it."

"I did, didn't I?" Will felt his chest fill with hatred -for himself and for Mister Stammets, for anyone that would do his innocent daughter harm. "Listen, Abigail. I-"

"I watched you kill Mister Stammets," she whispered. "Don't tell me he's gone again. I'm not a baby, dad. I want to go to school. It will look less suspicious, won't it?"

Will Graham stared at his daughter blankly, and his mouth was slack as his hands came up to lie flat on the table between them. This was his little girl before him, but suddenly she felt like a stranger. He wondered how he had he convinced himself she wouldn't know any better, let alone exactly what he was thinking. It would indeed look less suspicious, which was why he was going to work today as well, despite the alibi of having went to a colleague's party. He wanted so badly for Abigail to be none the wiser and innocent of all of it, wanted it more than anything right now, but what could he honestly do? Will's chest felt too tight as he attempted to compartmentalize everything, too tired to succeed but unable to accept that he was helpless.

“Abigail,” Will finally looked up at her, and while she did look more pale than usual, she didn’t look even a smidgen confused or outwardly bothered by their circumstances.

“Dad, I’m okay,” she persisted.

She got to her feet and padded across the floor softly to wrap her arms around him, and Will felt something deep inside of him snap as he held her close. He didn’t let himself cry again, but only because he had no energy to do so, knowing already how absolutely miserable the day was going to be. His daughter was in his arms comforting him after she’d seen him *kill* a man with his bare hands, when it should be the other way around, and he squeezed her closer as his breath hitched.

“I didn’t want you to see that,” he forced the words out before his throat clamped back down with emotion. “I’m so sorry, Abigail.”

She stroked a tiny hand into his hair and made shushing noises, and Will enveloped her with his arms and felt his breath shudder out of him as he realized the truth quite starkly; here he was fallen apart and confused, basically prostrated with the weight of what had happened, and here she was taking on the role of the comforting parent. Was it really so easy for her to accept this? Was she young enough to do that and move on as if nothing had happened? He remembered the first time he had killed a man for her and how simple it had been because it *was* for her. The murder had been fumbling and he had skipped town shortly after in his fright, but it had never come back to him, and so he had done it again because they- they deserved it, just as Mister Stammets did; and Abigail apparently recognized that. Or was it merely blind acceptance because she loved her father?

“It’s okay,” she whispered. “I’m okay. You’re okay. Mister Lecter said you did it because you love me so much.”

Abigail kissed his forehead before wordlessly taking up the two mugs on the table, rinsing them both out and setting them on the counter to dry. He hazarded a glance at her and saw her smiling at him genuinely, and he swallowed against the heavy lump in his throat. *Okay, Will, time to stop being a useless potato*, he thought with an inward grimace, and he finally moved from the chair to stretch. His body was stiff and heavy and he knew he’d be fighting the urge to nod off all day, but he had to face it all the same.

“You can have the shower,” Abigail said happily. “I cleaned up before I came down. I’m going to go get ready for school, okay?”

“Alright,” Will responded, and he felt hollow inside as he shuffled in place in their tiny kitchen, absentmindedly acknowledging that they would have to talk more about this.

He made it to the bathroom on autopilot and started the shower while he got undressed, and as he stood under the stream of hot water and looked at his bruised knuckles, he considered skipping town again. It would be so easy to leave, and while it would upset Abigail’s routine to start at a new school again -not to mention exhaust any savings he had remaining-, it would put his mind at ease. He was used to being the new neighbor in town, grew up being the new boy as his father’s work took them from one State to the next, and Abigail was used

to the same, though they certainly moved around much less. Unlike the other times, however, it would be difficult to leave this particular place.

They hadn't set down any roots, no, in fact between them both they barely owned much, but now he had what he never did before. Hannibal Lecter.

❀

Will hugged his daughter close and tight at the foot of the steps leading up to her school, and he ran a hand over her soft brown hair and looked into her face again. He searched the sapphire depths for anything that indicated she wasn't fine, almost hoping there was so he could take her back home and skip work and just hold her like she was a baby again, but there was nothing there besides the residues of a restless night's sleep. She kissed his nose with a giggle before she took off, and he stood to wave at her when she looked back at him, heart thumping as he realized she was checking to make sure he was okay as well. He walked to work with his head spinning and his thoughts bundled together unintelligibly, but when he arrived the place was still locked up tight. Various employees loitered around outside in the chilly morning air, including Beverly, who shivered and hopped in spot as she waited with the others.

"Hi," she greeted once she'd noticed him. "Boss man didn't show up, apparently. We're waiting on Mister Sutcliffe to arrive."

"Oh shit," Will widened his eyes and feigned surprise. "Guess we weren't the only ones having a good time last night."

"Speaking of which," Beverly looked at him blearily, and Will noticed she was definitely not chipper this morning as she normally was. "I remember letting you in, but otherwise the night is a blank. Did you get any goodies at least?"

"Oh yeah, but not coffee. Found the booze, though," Will joked awkwardly, and he figured it would look better if it seemed that he'd stayed at her party longer than he actually had. "The brownies tasted amazing."

"Zeller made them," Beverly snickered half-heartedly before rubbing the spot between her eyes with a hiss. "Wow, feels like an army of politicians moved into my brain."

"You were hammered when I got to your place, so no surprise there," Will laughed as he dug his hands into his pockets. "Is Zeller the loud guy from the tech department?"

"Yes, the one who never fucking stops singing. Oh god, I can hear him already. This day is gonna be *awful*," she said with a groan.

"Tell me about it," Will agreed as he thought about his evening with a loud sigh.

They waited nearly forty minutes before the place was opened, Mister Sutcliffe having arrived with a slew of expletives he didn't appear to care his employees could hear. And so the day progressed as normal, the only difference to many of them being the man in charge, which was admittedly a bit of a chore to handle. Mister Sutcliffe was older and apparently

grumpier, and he sat in Mister Stammet's office yelling at the phone for most of the day. Will gave him a wide berth and wheeled a shelf of books into one of the non-fiction aisles, tiredly running his fingers along the spines as he determined which title went where, and much of his day passed in a blur. He vaguely remembered Beverly cornering him in the staff room to apologize once more for how drunk she had been, but otherwise he existed in a perpetual state of cloudiness.

It lifted when he was fired, however.

"I don't care if you have ten kids you need to pick up, you can count yourself unemployed if you leave this building right now," Mister Sutcliffe yelled, and Will felt his mind make way for an unproportionate amount of anger at the older man flailing his hands around at him just then. "I already have enough no-shows today as is, so go back to work."

"She's only twelve, Mister Sutcliffe," Will argued with a growl he only barely managed to keep under control. " I can bring her here to wait out the rest of my shift, Mister Stammets u-"

"Mister Stammets isn't here now, is he?" the man took his glasses off and rubbed vigorously at the lenses. "You know what, get your things, you don't need to be working here if you feel like you can just stroll in and out of here whenever you want. That's not how the real world works, Mister… Whatever your name is."

And the door slammed behind the raging man, leaving Will to stand there with his mouth open in shock.

Fuck, he thought. *Fuck fuck fuck*.

His fisted his hands at his sides and clenched his teeth together tightly, but instead of fighting the injustice of it he merely walked out of the building quietly. He didn't have any 'things' here, thankfully, and so he left, the rage building up beneath his skin pulling his muscles tight with barely contained energy. The urge to smash Mister Sutcliffe's face into the desk he sat at was strong, and it lingered even as he arrived at Abigail's school to pick her up. She was waiting on the bottom step alone, arms clasped around her legs with her knees drawn close to her body, and she looked as if she were contemplating something heavily. Her childish features were pulled into an expression that looked far too mature on her face, but a huge smile replaced it as she caught sight of her father. Will felt some of his anger bleed out in a heavy sigh he disguised behind a yawn, and as she stood he held out his arm for her.

"Everything okay?" he asked as she grabbed his hand.

"Yeah," she said pertly. "What about you?"

"Long day," he said, and he couldn't help a small laugh when his daughter rolled her eyes up at him as they walked home.

He didn't tell her about the fact that he'd been fired. Enough had happened to them both at this point, and he found he couldn't even spare a thought more to his unemployed status with how tired he was. Will just wanted to fall into bed and sleep for a year straight, to curl up in

his blankets and never face the world again; to press against a warm, masculine body with a nose in his hair and fingers guiding the stress out of his limbs one by one. More than anything, though, Will wanted Hannibal to be with them right now, holding his other hand as the three of them walked down the street, and it didn’t matter where they went, only that they were together.

Later, as he made supper, he was still thinking about it, picturing the twin smiles on his little family’s faces, and he fell onto his bed and into an immediate slumber with the image nestled warmly in his thoughts.

Chapter End Notes

I think Abigail is more than intelligent enough to come to terms with this quicker than most children her age. Furthermore I think she would go along with it regardless, just as she went along with everything in the show xD Essentially I'm trying to convey that she doesn't know any better, but also that she does love her father very much.

So if that wasn't apparent I'm very sorry. I had a lot of trouble with this chapter, but I'm satisfied in the end at least!

Unknown Strife

Chapter Summary

Good intentions can have bad consequences.

Chapter Notes

I have more of a concrete idea as to where this is going now. TAKE THAT, WRITER'S BLOCK. I was admittedly almost about to let this series sit for a while and just take a break, but my passion for it has renewed! It's my first time writing anything that is not smut or a one-shot, so I suppose I should have expected some obstacles!

All mistakes are mine~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next night Abigail went to bed early after she completed her homework, and Will could see she was definitely ready for the weekend. He'd been worried about the bruises on her wrists drawing unwanted attention -not to mention the wrong kind-, but she'd apparently hidden them just as dutifully as she brushed the entire situation off. He tucked her into bed and kissed her forehead as she settled under the blankets, and she looked up at him with a furrowed brow.

"What's the matter, sweetpea?" he kissed the frown away from her forehead and smiled when she batted her hands at him.

"Nothing," she said with a smile. "I love you, dad."

"I love you too, Abigail," he returned the smile. "More than anything in the world."

She giggled and rolled over, turning her back to him and bundling up under the blanket into her customary burrito. He left the room but kept the door ajar slightly, less to let the light in and more for his peace of mind, as he knew he would return to check up on her often. He returned to the kitchen and poked at the coffee machine miserably. He'd spent the entire day sleeping after seeing his daughter off to school, waking only to pick her up, and he would have flopped into bed right now if he weren't expecting a visit from his very own serial killer. Will's heart raced as he wiped the counters down and did the few dishes that sat in the sink, and it wasn't long before he heard two evenly-timed knocks sound at the front door. There wasn't much that could be done about his unruly hair, but he glanced at himself in the mirror quickly on his way to let Hannibal in, grimacing as he realized he looked as shitty as he felt.

“Hi,” he greeted as he opened the door and took in the sight of the dapper man on his doorstep.

“Good evening, Will,” Hannibal’s voice was warm and his eyes were glittering under the light spilling out from the kitchen, and Will smiled up at him briefly before beckoning him in.

“You want coffee?” he asked.

“No, but thank you for offering,” Hannibal removed his jacket and folded it over the chair at the kitchen table that had become ‘his’.

“Yeah, no problem,” Will set it to brew before he took his seat across from the other, and for a short time they were both quiet, Hannibal sitting primly and looking entirely out of place in the tiny and unorderly kitchen.

“You do not look well, Will,” the older man observed, and Will coughed into his hand as he felt his cheeks heat.

“You should work on your flattery,” he joked as he kicked one of his feet against Hannibal gently, socked toes nudging against the hard surface of fancy shoes.

Will had slept enough to clear his mind, and while that wasn’t a great thing at first, now he felt more in control of himself. Less of a cloud and more of a rock, as stable as he ever had been, and he looked back on himself the last two days with an amount of embarrassment but also anger. After the ordeal that could have seen Abigail hurt or worse, it had been her left to pick up the pieces, to comfort, to rock them back and forth as they hugged and to say that everything was okay. The reversed roles forced Will Graham to realize, in retrospect, that his precious daughter was no longer a child indeed, but that didn’t mean that he would stop being fiercely protective of her -it just meant that he had to be infinitely more so to balance it all out.

The renewed vigor that he felt after his much-need rest suffused him with his usual boldness, and he was determined not to break apart so disastrously again, because this time he had more than his daughter to be strong for.

“I’m merely making an observation,” Hannibal murmured. “If I wanted to flatter you, you would surely know.”

“So you don’t want to flatter me?” Will pretended to be offended, setting a hand against his chest as he leaned back against his chair.

“I think you know that is entirely untrue,” the other man said around a knowing smirk. “But I would rather broach a different, less enjoyable topic first.”

Hannibal seemed to fit in amongst the tiny kitchen the more he sat at the table, and Will blinked as he imagined the other as a chamaeleon, taking on the form around him to appear invisible or just the right amount of obvious. He often thought about Hannibal sitting there for dinner or breakfast, and as Will stared into red-brown eyes now he became aware of the

fact that despite his bespoke suit and slicked-back hair, the man belonged here just as much he and Abigail did.

“You were different,” Will said as he set his hands on the table to tap rhythmically against the wood surface. “When you came back from disposing of the bodies. Closed off.”

“Did that frighten you?”

Will heard the coffee machine go off and made to stand, but Hannibal gestured for him to remain sitting, and instead he retrieved the beverage for him, bringing sugar and a spoon to the table with the steaming mug. He set it in front of Will, leaning over him just enough that the younger man could smell his cologne, and he inhaled it with a slightly shuddering breath as he nodded in response to Hannibal’s question.

“It did. More than I’d like to admit to,” Will whispered as Hannibal remained poised at his back. “It felt like the earth had splintered between us and I could no longer reach you.”

Long fingers settled flutter-soft against one of Will’s wrists, and he swallowed around the lump in his throat as he remembered the distance he was describing, how Hannibal’s eyes had been still and alien; he *had* been a stranger, Will had come to realize, but he had been closed off for a very particular reason. It was very obvious Hannibal Lecter was in total control of himself at any given moment, with every emotion or movement being played out done so accordingly and with absolute intention. Even now, his hand settling more fully against one of Will’s own, there was meaning behind each action.

“I did not mean to frighten you,” Hannibal said, and his voice tickled at the curls of hair near Will’s ear as he leant forward. “And that brings me to a confession of sorts.”

Will tangled his fingers with Hannibal’s and acknowledged the gentle weight of the older man’s other hand coming to rest on his opposite shoulder with a quiet sigh. It was easy to close his eyes and lose himself in the sensation of closeness, but Will shook it off and shifted enough to catch Hannibal in his periphery.

“Oh?” Will questioned with a smile. “That sounds pretty scary too, not going to lie.”

“I assure you it is not ‘scary’, or anything of the like.”

Hannibal didn’t say anything else for a long time despite his words, instead opting to pull Will’s chair out easily and to shift it, angling it so that they could look into each other’s eyes. Will held his breath as he took in the expression on the other man’s face, the utter affection and longing, and it was as if a door had opened that had been locked before. He looked into the endless depths of Hannibal’s maroon eyes and felt the air gust out of his chest. Where last night Hannibal had been closed off, even as their lips had met messily in a startling moment of passion before he’d left, now he was anything but.

Will nearly felt lightheaded as he beheld what was behind this newly opened door.

“I understand that we have not known each other long,” Hannibal said. “But we have grown close in that time regardless. It was as I was retrieving Mister Stammet’s corpse that I became

aware of just how much you mean to me, dear Will."

"That's… romantic," Will laughed, couldn't help it even as he was held in thrall, even as a strong hand came to bracket his face and the pad of Hannibal's thumb stroked under his eye - a gesture Will was growing used to even as he wondered about its meaning.

"I am charmed that you think so. However, that isn't my confession."

Will couldn't help the embarrassing yelp that left him as Hannibal pulled him swiftly to his feet to hold him tightly against a broad chest. Strong arms wrapped around his waist and a nose buried itself into his curls, and Will felt Hannibal inhale deeply, felt the movement against his own chest where they sood heart-to-heart. It was easy to see now that the serial killer wasn't much taller than him, nor even much wider, but Will knew it wasn't Hannibal's physical presence that made him appear to be so, knew the aura that surrounded the serial killer had a lot to do with it instead. Sometimes when he pictured Hannibal in his mind he did so with a shadow at his back, a void that extended beyond sight, and it was that image that he considered as the man's breath caressed his hair and lips closed over his ear in a tender kiss.

"I feel like I am falling," Hannibal's accented voice was rough and close, repeating the very words that Will had said that night at Beverly's party.

Heart thumping faster, Will embraced Hannibal closer, tighter, dragged his mouth along a clean shaven jaw as he whispered, "You can't. I'm holding you too tightly."

And they stood like that for a long time with barely any space between them.

The artificial lighting in the kitchen was too bright when there could just as easily be candles lit over a romantic dinner, or two glasses of wine on the table instead of an abandoned mug of cooling coffee. Will was the first to pull away but only very slightly, and he crushed his lips against Hannibal's after grabbing a fistful of his hair, backed the older man up until he hit the very same counter that Will had last night. He trapped Hannibal there with his hands on either side of his body as their mouths tangled wetly and their tongues danced around each other, gentle but altogether not as they both fought for dominance.

❀

That weekend Will found himself floating along like a cloud, but in a different manner in comparison to the sleepiness that had pervaded his senses the day he got fired.

He hadn't thought much about that deliberately, knowing he would fret and sit down and grow angry and headachey over finances, deciding in the end that the matter could wait until after Abigail's birthday on Monday. He wanted the day to be special, especially considering what had happened, and he was looking forward to it probably even more than she was, though she looked excited as they discussed what kind of cake she wanted. Surprises were redundant when it was just the two of them, and furthermore she appeared to have taken on his dislike of them, so on Sunday they went to the grocery store together to pick out a sizeable ice cream cake and a pack of rainbow candles. It was as they were turning down the aisle to pick up said candles that they nearly bumped carts with Alana Bloom.

“Hi there,” the woman greeted politely, looking between him and Abigail with a smile Will realized didn’t reach her eyes.

“Hello, Mrs Bloom,” Abigail returned the greeting happily as she stood with her fingers entangled in the metal of their cart.

“Mrs Bloom,” Will inclined his head and looked away from her eyes as he nudged his daughter gently. “You can go ahead and pick out the candles.”

Abigail looked between her father and her teacher briefly before nodding, and Will frowned at the minute hesitation as she puttered off quickly to pick out the candles at her father’s bidding. Alana shifted awkwardly as she respectfully didn’t chase eye-contact, preferring to have this conversation at school instead of now, but between her own agenda and his work schedule, they had been unable to meet again.

“I was hoping we could have talked sooner,” she said softly. “But I understand that you’re busy, and I won't keep you long.”

“No, no, it’s okay,” Will waved the words off and gripped the handle of his cart nervously. “Is everything okay?”

“Yes, yes, it’s fine. I just wanted to mention that Abigail has been doing amazing with the new curriculum.”

“Ah, yeah. There’s a but, though,” Will laughed anxiously as he looked at his daughter further up the aisle.

“Yes, there’s a but,” Alana lowered her voice, a fact that Will noticed and one that didn’t assuage his nerves at all. “Abigail is a brilliant young lady, but she just doesn’t appear to be interested in socializing. It wouldn’t be a concern normally, but even at recess she ostracizes herself entirely.”

“Ah,” Will sighed loudly, but frowned as he remembered his daughter talking avidly about a girl named Elise, who he had assumed was her friend by now. “What about Elise?”

“Who?” Alana raised a brow in confusion.

“Elise Nichols,” as Will spoke he felt his guts tangling unpleasantly, finally pulling his gaze away from his daughter to search Alana’s face worriedly. “There’s… there’s no Elise Nichols in her class, is there?”

“There isn’t,” Alana confirmed with an uncertain nod. “Listen, can we meet next week? You can call the school office and let me know when a good time would be. I feel like we need to discuss this further.”

“Yeah, of course,” Will nodded and was surprised that his voice was steady.

Abigail returned that moment with her selected candles, and Will forced a smile onto his face for her sake as Mrs Bloom took her leave silently. He listened to his daughter’s chatter as they checked out, but his mind was far away. He held no delusions that what had happened to

them both that night with Eldon Stammets would be without consequences, but this unexpected turn of events hinted at an ongoing distress that he had been unaware of entirely. Will's chest was tight with failure, and he marvelled that for someone who killed to keep Abigail safe, he was incredibly fucking inept at actually *knowing* who his own daughter was. Will felt his heart seizing more as each moment passed, but he kept a firm smile on his face for her until he was alone that night, cake stored safely away in the freezer and candles sitting innocently in their package on the kitchen counter.

Then he allowed himself to fall onto the couch in the living room and bury his head into his hands.

Chapter End Notes

This part is called Murder Love for a reason, I promise! But Abigail hasn't had a lot of attention and I feel that I need to focus more on her to balance everything out for the development of the future Murder Family ;3

I love you all, and thank you for continuing to join me for this ride~

NOTE: I'm trying to reread through to see if I accidentally had Abigail interact with Elise Nichols in view of Will. If I have, I'm sorry for the confusion. If any spots that, I'd love a pointer to it!

Unknown Sincerity

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal spend the day together and discuss a few things.

Chapter Notes

Shorter than usual, but I didn't want to rush the birthday into this chapter! And my day is tied up, sadly.

All mistakes are mine~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Monday morning found Will sitting at *Crawford's Treats* with a small black coffee and a newspaper spread to the classifieds. There were several jobs available for him to peruse, and as he sipped at the hot beverage before him he circled the few that he would even begin to qualify for. He underlined the phone numbers he would call later when he returned home, and he was just sitting back to stretch his legs out when he became aware he was being watched. A glance over his shoulder found Hannibal Lecter's handsome face turned in his direction as he waited in line. Will smiled at him and lifted his hand in a wave, noting the polite incline of Hannibal's head with a pleasant feeling in his belly.

"You're not working today?" the man inquired with a raised brow as he pulled up a chair to the tiny table.

"Uh, yeah, no. I was fired on Friday," Will muttered. "I'm looking through the paper now for some possible prospects."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Hannibal asked with a frown, and Will realized it was genuine, and he couldn't help a self-deprecating chuckle in response.

"Must have slipped my mind when you came over the other night," he said. "And honestly I was so exhausted I'm only now giving myself time to process it."

"Fair enough," Hannibal leaned into the chair and stretched his legs out, his feet coming to rest comfortably against Will's beneath the table. "May I inquire as to why you were fired?"

"You can, but I don't even know why myself, really," and Will told him about the incredibly angry Mister Sutcliffe, heart hammering away in his chest at Hannibal's proximity.

It was easy to become aware that as the minutes passed, Hannibal's body moved closer to him deliberately, starting with his legs sneaking beneath the table. Eventually the bigger man leaned over the table easily with one hand resting comfortably on Will's arm where it sat near the newspaper, his other wrapping long fingers around his own paper cup as he periodically sipped at it. Will snuck a few glances at his face as they spoke, feeling his body unwind gently as they proceeded to look at the classifieds together now. He was glad for another opinion and for the chance to discuss certain jobs he had circled, the whys and hows being met with prim nods and a sharp-toothed grin at one point when they both noticed there were a lot of babysitter jobs available. It was nearing noon when they both stood to dispose of their cups, and Will walked out of the cafe with Hannibal in tow shortly after.

"I will talk to a few people," Hannibal promised as they stood close in the cold air outside.

"You don't need to, I should be able to find a job quick enough," *hopefully*, he didn't add.

"Nonsense. I'd rather not see you burdened," Hannibal's voice lowered as he reached out to stroke the frown away from Will's brow. "There we are. I've been wanting to do that all morning."

"You could have," Will remarked. "I wouldn't have minded."

"I'm uncertain how to proceed in public in regards to you."

Will felt his lips tug into a grin as they huddled together out on the street, which was coming alive with lunch approaching. While the cafe had been relatively busy as they sat close together, it suddenly occurred to him he really didn't care one way or another. Let people look at them, let them stare or judge. It was the twenty-first century, people could honestly just fuck off as far as Will was concerned (and he was, but so long as he didn't have to directly face strangers, he was fine with it, of course.) But he wasn't sure how to come out and say that to Hannibal, a man who was entirely conscious of himself in every manner. *I might not care, but does he really want to be seen with a man like me on his arm?* The thought was both cringe-worthy and curious to consider.

"I promise I won't bite," Will went with humor, because joking was something he could definitely do.

"Ah. Well, thank you, Will," Hannibal joined him in a laugh, before he stroked his thumb over Will's brow again. "There's that frown once more."

"How rude of it," Will giggled, before he sobered quickly. "I'm trying not to let the stress eat me, to be honest."

"Yes, that is apparent to me, I can feel your tension from here," which wasn't a huge feat, considering they were standing with their chests nearly touching.

"Should I apologize?" Will snickered and looked down at their feet, him in his ratty sneakers and Hannibal in his fancy sharp-toed loafers.

"Not at all. You can accept my lunch invitation, however."

And that is how Will found himself seated at Hannibal's dining table forty minutes later, jacket hung up in the entrance hall. The splendor of the man's home was highlighted this time around with an awareness Will hadn't had the night after Miss Sterling's death. He took in the dining room with wide-mouthed wonder, sniffed at the herbs along the wall behind him when he grew antsy, and as the owner himself puttered around in the kitchen a moment longer, Will found himself standing in front of the fireplace. Hannibal Lecter certainly had a very bizarre taste in decor, he surmised. Who enjoyed their meals with the depiction of Leda and the Swan presiding over them? Regardless, he returned to his seat at the massive and gleaming table and stroked the burgundy cloth adorning it.

"My apologies, Will," the man's voice broke the dining room's silence as he strode in with two plates in hand. "Inviting you here was purely on a whim, and so I found myself unsure what to prepare."

"Oh, it's fine," Will waved a hand in the air. "I'll eat anything, really."

"I shall keep that in mind."

Will looked down at the plate that was set in front of him, stomach rumbling at the soft breads and slices of thinly-cut meats presented to him. Hannibal set his own plate down across from him and then excused himself again for a few short moments, returning with a wooden platter piled high with cut fruits and creamy brie and a pitcher of orange juice. One last trip brought him to finally sit after setting out two glasses for them each, and he settled across from Will politely. As they ate Will found himself mildly self-conscious of his dining habits, but he didn't bother to mimic Hannibal's straight-backed posture and nearly mechanically precise movements, and a glance into narrowed red-brown eyes showed him that that fact pleased his host.

"So tell me what else is bothering you," Hannibal said after he had swallowed his mouthful of food. "What keeps drawing your brow into such a frown? As adorable as it is."

Will paused with a grape halfway to his mouth and felt his cheeks heat at the compliment. Somehow, hearing Hannibal's cultured tones saying the word 'adorable' made him want to snicker as he thought of how many other words the man could have used. He had an extensive grasp on the English language, and his vocabulary was vast, and yet -the simplicity was more flattering than a word Will would likely have had to look up in the dictionary later on, and he found himself unable to tamper down the smile that took over his face.

"You think I'm adorable when I'm upset?" he asked cheekily.

"At all times," Hannibal corrected, and he tilted his head and narrowed his eyes further at the younger man across from him. "Though you've admitted to being upset. Please, tell me. Perhaps I may be of assistance."

"Smooth, Mister Lecter," but Will appreciated the sentiment entirely, and so he told Hannibal about the conversation he'd had with Alana Bloom at the grocery store.

"Perhaps Abigail is merely looking out for you," Hannibal suggested afterwards. "She's a smart girl. I imagine she knows you subsist mainly on stress."

“Wow, I guess I don’t have to ask if you know as well,” Will sipped at his juice with raised brows. “Hell, I didn’t even know I gave that impression.”

“It’s not wholly apparent,” the older man reassured him. “Only to those that bother to look - or subsequently those who *know* to.”

“Makes sense,” Will had begun to slump under the reminder that he was less aware of his own daughter than he’d care to admit.

Again.

“I feel compelled to comfort you now,” Hannibal confessed. “I didn’t mean to upset you with my initial suggestion. But Abigail is very bright, so it is entirely possible she spoke of this Elise Nichols to assure you she was alright.”

“But she could have told me the truth instead. Mrs Bloom implied she *chooses* to have no friends,” and wasn’t that depressing to think about, considering Will consciously chose to do the same.

“Much like you do?” the older man commented, almost as if he had read Will’s mind, which gave him pause enough to stare silently across the table as long fingers closed around the pitcher of juice.

“Yeah,” Will agreed eventually, and he nodded when Hannibal wordlessly asked if he wanted more juice, watched as it was poured cleanly. “I just… I don’t know, honestly. With everything that has happened I’m scared to upset her more than I know she already is.”

“And more than that, despite your unquestionable love for her, you do not know how to approach the subject, do you?”

Hannibal was entirely correct. Will was smart enough to recognize he was biased, that he was stuck in his way of being the overprotective father. It was so incredibly easy to picture her as the helpless babe strapped to his chest as he worked at home many years ago, cooing up at him and drooling all over everything he owned. He had never once figured raising a child alone would be an easy feat, but he also didn’t think he’d have so many issues understanding her or being aware of who she was becoming. Consequently, knowing his own behaviors influenced her without his knowledge made him feel like even more of a failure. It wasn’t enough she had comforted *him* after an event that surely must have traumatized her.

“She’s my little girl,” Will whispered towards his plate, looking away from the man across the table. “My baby.”

“And she always will be, but she is growing up, Will,” Hannibal’s voice had taken on a comforting tone, and Will would have generally found the words patronizing, but coming from him they weren’t.

“I don’t want her to,” Will confessed irrationally.

Will heard Hannibal's shoes click on the hardwood floor as he got to his feet, and a second later his chair was pulled gently away from the table. Strong hands tugged him to his feet until Will found himself held close against Hannibal's chest once more. It was a familiar position, and he nosed up under Hannibal's chin with a loud sigh.

"I'll talk to her after her birthday," he said as he wrapped his arms tightly around Hannibal's trim middle. "Speaking of which, would you like to join us tonight? Ice cream cake guaranteed."

"I would love that," a laugh felt as well as heard soothed Will, and he let go of some of the tension their conversation had built in him.

"Me too."

❀

Hannibal dropped Will off at his house with the promise that he would return later for his pupil's birthday. It was a pleasant surprise, to be invited to something so intimate, and he felt his heart skip a beat at the thought, and at the echo of closeness that remained in the vehicle even after Will had departed. He smiled as he drove to the library and met Mister Sutcliffe, and as he asked Will's former employer for his business card after a polite discussion about classic literature, the smile turned into one of a predator having caught the scent of its prey.

What a surprising day indeed, he thought happily.

Chapter End Notes

Abigail's story will be explained in the next chapter, I'm not forgetting our darling Murder Daughter ♥♥♥ This chapter mainly highlights Will's denial that his baby girl is growing up quite so fast~ And also an excuse for more Hannigram comfort and feels :D

Unknown Hurt

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal celebrate Abigail's birthday.

Chapter Notes

YAHHHHH, another chapter in one day~ I couldn't help myself. I feel much better, too, and now I feel happy to finish another part of this series. As ever, the next part shall come along soon!

All mistakes are mine~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal arrived at seven-thirty PM, and Will let him in with a bright smile on his face.

The younger man looked more animated than he had this morning, a bounce to his step that hadn't been there before. Hannibal inclined his head in greeting and stepped into the small apartment, the entrance of which opened immediately into the kitchen. It was difficult in some ways to adjust to the lack of size Will's home provided, especially in comparison to his own spacious abode, but he found himself settling in with barely a flicker of irritation. That seemed to happen quite often where Will Graham was concerned, however, easy acceptance of what would otherwise make him curl his lip.

"Good evening, Miss Abigail," Hannibal greeted the young woman who already sat at the table.

"Hi, Mister Lecter," she waved pertly and sat up straighter once she caught sight of him. She was happy that her father had invited her piano instructor; she loved Will very much, but it was nice to do something different once in awhile. "Dad bought me a new jacket. Do you like it?"

"It is a very nice one," Hannibal regarded her with a polite smile, noting that the fashionable garment was both warm and trendy - and likely a pretty penny more expensive than most things that she or her father generally wore. "I've brought you something as well."

He handed her a card, having opted to go the simple cash route. His role in the little family was not as concrete as he would prefer, but it was coming along nicely, and it wasn't his aspiring pupil that required impressing at this stage anyhow. Hannibal turned his attention to

Will at that moment, who was dressed in jeans and a close-fitting long sleeved shirt that had two brass buttons along the collar, and it was a welcome change from his normal plaid ensembles. Overall the outfit accented his slim figure nicely, and Hannibal raked his gaze along the man appreciatively, making it entirely apparent as he did so.

Hannibal let the shark's grin on his face show briefly as he was rewarded with pinkening cheeks and a shy cough.

"We don't like singing the birthday song, so sorry in advance if that's your thing," Will said in an effort to distract himself. "The cake is still a little too har- erm, *hard* at the moment, so we were just hanging out in the meantime."

Hannibal took the seat Will normally sat in as he was waved towards the table with a nervous flutter of hands, but he didn't take his eyes off of the other, in fact he inclined his head and stared resolutely. It was curious to see how anxious the young man grew under his scrutiny, not to mention distracting, as Will's unintentional vocal slip-up had him contemplating various situations he would not be adverse to. For his part, Will Graham felt well and truly hopeless. It was high school all over again, and he turned away from the burning stare that he could feel burrowing into his back. He couldn't find it in himself to grow frustrated at the attention, though; no, his belly was twitching with excitement, and he leaned against the counter instead, choosing to face those maroon eyes with a private smirk in his own blue ones.

"What did Mister Lecter get you?" Will inquired of his daughter, who had spent the last few moments carefully unsealing the pink envelope that contained her gift.

Abigail ran her fingers over the glossy card after she eased it out, the cover of which depicted a high definition photo of the keys on a piano. Inscribed on the front in a manufactured fancy print was the simple well-wishing of a happy birthday, and when she opened it she found a fresh hundred dollar note clipped to the inside. Hannibal had written his own personable message within as well, his calligraphed strokes fancier than the words on the front, and it read:

To my favorite pupil on her thirteenth birthday,
I hope this finds you well on the evening of your celebration. Remember, diligence is key.
Warm regards,
Hannibal Lecter

She unclipped the bill with gentle fingers and waved it once in Will's direction, and then turned her smile on the man that sat in her father's chair.

"Thank you, Mister Lecter," she said with a tinkling laugh, and when Will looked away to retrieve three plates, she nodded at Hannibal once.

Hannibal felt genuine pride for the young girl, perhaps even affection -and even if that weren't the case, he would play the part for Will's sake if it came to it in the future. But he had faith that it would never be required of him, and more than that, he found that he resented the thought of playing pretend around Will Graham. Well, more than he had already, but what

the young man did not know now would be rectified at a later date, and he returned the subtle nod that Abigail had bestowed upon him graciously.

“Alright,” Will announced as he brought the cake over. “Let me find the matches real quick, then we can dig in.”

It was a sight to behold, truly. Hannibal had not managed to observe Will as a father very often, their interactions limited to their handful of ‘murder dates’ or other similarly intimate occasions. He felt his chest grow almost warm as he catalogued the new expressions and the absolutely comfortable tone of voice designated for the Graham household (and bemusedly entertained the undercurrent of benign jealousy that he felt for having not experienced that warmth for himself -yet.)

“Okay, got ‘em,” Will peeled open the package to stick thirteen rainbow candles into the barely pliant surface of the dessert, struck a match alight and deftly lit each wick, then stood back so that Abigail could blow them out. “Happy birthday, Abi.”

“Happy birthday,” Hannibal echoed politely.

“Thanks, dad. Thank you, Mister Lecter,” Abigail’s smile was huge and sincere as she looked between them, and Hannibal observed silently as she closed her eyes and huffed out a breath that snuffed each wax horror in one go.

Afterwards, Will sliced the ice cream cake into sizeable squares, and he gestured that they could help themselves as he finally sat with them, dropping into the remaining chair with a contented sigh. The confection was much too sweet and this side of too solid, but Hannibal ate his share quietly. He could tell right away from Will’s tight-lipped expression that the other was aware of his suffering, after having glimpsed his kitchen and a shadow of his penchant for fine foods.

Hannibal decided to forgive him for the laugh he also knew was brewing beneath that cheeky countenance, and additionally for his severe lack of dining etiquette.

❀

Will let out a long sigh as he did the dishes quickly, glancing towards the living room where he knew his daughter and Hannibal sat together awaiting him. He always let Abigail decide what she wanted to do with the evening on her birthday, including staying up an hour later than her bedtime (which was eight-thirty PM on a school night), and tonight she had picked out a movie for them to watch together. All three of them. Will and his- what was Hannibal to him? *Murder lover*, Will thought with a snort. Just like a real family, food digesting in their bellies as they relaxed around the television. It was a nice thought, even if he knew it was entirely unconventional where Hannibal Lecter was concerned. A man like that likely visited the theatre and watched an opera as entertainment, not a bit of it cheap by any means. Will made a mental note to ask him what he did for pleasure other than kill people that made him angry.

He padded softly into the living room once he’d dried his hands, and found Abigail curled up against a pillow at one end of the couch and Hannibal sitting politely with his knees crossed

at the other. He plopped down in the middle of them, the old piece of furniture at its capacity with the new addition, and tried to ignore how warm Hannibal's thigh felt pressed gently along his own as he flicked the play button on the television remote. Jagged and bloodied lettering depicting the title of the horror movie she had chosen came into view, accompanied by a screeching soundtrack and cheap effects, and despite having watched this exact film only last week, Will got comfortable and-

-set his hand on Hannibal's leg as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

He was glad that the room was dark now save for the television screen, as the blush that painted over his face was fervent, but he didn't snatch his hand away from the smooth fabric of Hannibal's pants. That would bring more attention to his fuck-up than needed, and so he kept it there, fingers shaking marginally as he felt the minute flex of muscles beneath his digits. Beyond that Hannibal didn't react, and after a while Will eased into how comfortable it felt to touch him so casually. And so they were quiet as they watched the killer on the TV stalking after his victim, and the evening proceeded in an orderly fashion. Then partway through the movie, as Abigail shifted to curl against Will's side with eyes still glued to the screen, Hannibal rested his arm along the back of the couch while Will shifted distractedly to accommodate her.

Hannibal could clearly see from his periphery when Will looked up at him, could feel the smile in the air as he settled his fingers to stroke through the downy curls at the back of his warm neck. This felt nice, he decided. The word family eluded him, but the atmosphere was suitably intimate, and he was convinced that he had duly impressed Will Graham this evening. Furthermore it was becoming quickly apparent that their relationship was less defined by murder at this point, and instead centered around healthier prospects such as-

"I love this part," Abigail gushed suddenly, and Hannibal felt Will's fingers tighten on his leg reflexively.

Oh god, Will thought with a barely concealed wince. Not at the sound that his daughter had made, but at the fact that his short-lived shock caused his fingers to dance along the inside of Hannibal's thigh. And when he made to remove his hand altogether, subtle as possible, the long fingers stroking the nape of his neck tapped against him once in reprimand. All of this as they sat huddled on the couch that was just as small as the rest of the house was, but a glance at Abigail showed her avid features as she watched her favorite slasher flick, so Will settled once more.

"That was rather enjoyable," Hannibal remarked once the film had finished.

"A true classic," Will agreed, proud that his voice was steady.

The birthday girl was absolutely silent, and they both glanced down at her synchronously to find her fast asleep with her face buried into Will's side, little snores sounding from her opened mouth. She looked so innocent, young as she truly was even as she moved into her early teens. Always his baby-faced little girl, and he picked her up gently to bring her to his room again, tucked her into the large bed and kissed her forehead while his heart climbed into his throat with emotion. The evening had been quiet and intimate and peaceful, and overall pleasant. In a perfect world he knew they would have had a huge party with friends and

family and people from the neighborhood, but perfect worlds didn't exist, and he would take this one a million times over. He could worry and fret, and he still had to talk to her about Elise, but for now all that mattered was that she was safe and sound and tucked into bed to sleep the night away. Tomorrow was another day.

Will returned to find Hannibal sitting where he'd left him, straight-backed posture familiar to him rather than denoting any discomfort on the other's part. And like earlier when he set his hand almost mindlessly on the serial killer's leg, now Will dropped into Hannibal's lap as if he belonged there, straddled the man and cupped his handsome face in both hands to hold him in place for a kiss. It was a chaste thing, lips barely brushing, and he looked determinedly into red-brown eyes while he sat astride powerful thighs.

"I'm glad you came," he whispered into Hannibal's mouth.

"And I," Hannibal agreed, and his voice was so soft that Will leaned ever closer.

"Maybe next year you can bake us a cake," Will said with humor -but he certainly hoped that there would be a next year for them all, and more years to follow.

"Most definitely," and large hands came to settle at Will's waist as their lips met in a languid and damp duel, not hungry or wet just yet, but the night was yet young.

❀

Abigail rolled over onto her back once she heard her father leave the room.

His bed wasn't as comfy as hers, but he felt better with her sleeping here, taking the couch the last few nights instead. She didn't mind it, though. She loved how his face softened when she climbed under his heavier blankets, and she knew that he returned to check up on her often during the night, which made her feel safe and secure.

But she wished she could tell her father the truth about the man in the other room. She hated lying to him.

"We will tell him," Hannibal said as they sat at the piano together.

"Promise?" she fixed the position of her fingers and looked up at her instructor and friend.

"I promise, dear Abigail."

Chapter End Notes

-coughs- I swear on my fingers that this series will have a happy ending ♥

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!